Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, February 22, 2006** **3:00 p.m.**
Date: 06/02/22
The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated January 17, 2006, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Almighty God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Your blessings on all here present. We ask Your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join in in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members and Guests:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Mr. Lorieau. I think Team Canada could have used you in Italy today.

Please be seated.

head: **Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor**

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members, while it is not my usual custom to make mention of persons in the galleries, on this day I'm going to make an exception. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is Captain Manuel Panchana of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. If you would rise, sir. On the 15th day of December of 2005 Captain Panchana was leading his platoon on operations near Kandahar in Afghanistan when insurgents detonated an explosive device. He and two of his soldiers were seriously wounded. On the 15th day of January 2006 another incident near Kandahar claimed the life of a Canadian diplomat and seriously wounded three Canadian soldiers. Like Captain Panchana, all five of the wounded soldiers in these two incidents call this province of Alberta their home.

The challenges that they face in their recoveries are deserving of our heartfelt support and encouragement. We are ever mindful that the peace and freedoms we enjoy are borne by the sacrifices and risks made and taken by our men and women in uniform. For those in our Canadian Forces who have recently embarked to Afghanistan for challenging duty in the service of their sovereign and country and for their families we pray for a successful tour and for their safe return. [standing ovation]

Thank you, all. I'm sure that that message will be heard as far away as Kandahar.

The Royal Canadian Artillery Band will now play a brief musical interlude, the details of which are in your program. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was founded in Quebec City in 1879, and it was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band is today under the direction of Captain Brian Greenwood, who will direct from the Speaker's gallery.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and Mrs. Kwong, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

head: **Speech from the Throne**

His Honour: Pray be seated.

Fellow Albertans, welcome to the Second Session of the 26th Alberta Legislature.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Alberta Legislature and 100 years of democracy in Alberta. As we celebrate this great occasion, may we all take a moment to reflect on the tremendous contributions of those who came before us and the great privilege we have been given as servants of this wonderful province and its people. It is therefore an honour to deliver the Speech from the Throne, as it is an honour to serve as this province's Lieutenant Governor.

During the past year I had the opportunity to travel throughout this wonderful province and meet thousands of warm, caring, hard-working people. I joined Albertans in welcoming Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh on a royal visit, and I attended countless events where communities were celebrated and great Albertans were honoured.

It was truly a special year for me and for all Albertans as we celebrated the province's centennial. The year was filled with special events large and small, legacies created in nearly every community, and birthday celebrations that spread across the entire province. These reflected the tremendous pride Albertans have in this province and their optimism for its future.

That optimism is well placed. Alberta is beginning its second

century from an enviable position. By nearly every economic measure Alberta leads the country. Last year Alberta's economy grew the fastest of all Canadian provinces. Alberta had the highest population growth, the lowest unemployment rate, the highest average incomes, and the lowest overall taxes in the country.

The year 2005 also marked a very significant milestone for Albertans. It was the first time in decades that Alberta rang in a debt-free new year. This milestone coincided with the arrival of record-high energy revenues for Alberta. While these create opportunities for our province, Albertans know we can't count on them lasting forever. That's why the government will use this opportunity wisely by setting priorities, creating long-term benefits for Albertans, and keeping an eye firmly on the future.

A Learning Society

Albertans know that building and educating tomorrow's workforce is one of the wisest investments we can make. The creation of a learning society begins with the youngest members of our province. Alberta already has an education system that is respected nationally and internationally with a strong curriculum, excellent teachers, and committed parents and students. This year government will work to further strengthen our education system and ensure that all of our students can take full advantage of the world-class education opportunities available to them.

A series of round-tables with youth from across the province will be held to help us better understand why students leave school early. A high school completion symposium, which will include teens, parents, business leaders, and educators, will help us develop a provincial strategy to increase high school completion rates.

The government took many steps to strengthen the postsecondary system during the province's centennial year. Over 7,000 new learning opportunities, including apprenticeships, have been created, a new endowment fund and new scholarship programs were established, and several capital projects were begun. This year the government will again cover the cost of tuition increases at public postsecondary institutions and will develop a new tuition policy.

We will also introduce measures that reflect all the expenses students face, including accommodation, textbooks, fees, and tuition, to ensure that cost isn't a barrier to students getting an education.

Alberta will take immediate steps to address labour shortages that threaten economic growth. It will increase education in areas of skill shortages by increasing grant support for specific programs. This includes partnering with aboriginal groups and industry on new training projects for aboriginal people. The government will develop a new strategy to increase awareness of Alberta as a destination of choice for skilled immigrants, and it will expand immigrant settlement services and language training and make it easier for foreign-trained professionals to work in Alberta.

Alberta will also plan for the future by developing a strategy to address skills shortages and enhance education levels in Alberta. People with advanced skills, creativity, and education will keep Alberta's economy strong.

A Prosperous Society

A strong economy sustains a high quality of life both now and for the future. The government will work to build a prosperous society by staying true to the fiscal principles that have served this province so well: balanced budgets, no debt, and low taxes. It will remain a leader in Canada for government accountability and transparency, with regular communication with and reporting to Albertans. This year the government will review its fiscal framework to ensure that it positions Alberta well for the future.

The government recognizes that the prosperity that comes from high resource revenues belongs to all Albertans, including future Albertans. That's why Alberta's plan for using budget surpluses includes increasing our savings. Later this month the government will make a substantial $1 billion investment in the heritage fund. Further investment in the heritage fund will be announced in Budget 2006. These investments will ensure that some of today's prosperity is saved for future generations.

A portion of the surplus will also be dedicated to addressing our infrastructure needs. This is an area where government has demonstrated a strong commitment. In recent years Alberta has dedicated billions of dollars to meet the infrastructure needs of the growing economy, a level of support unmatched anywhere else in the country.

In 2006 construction in the province will go on at the fastest rate ever in Alberta's history. Work will begin or continue on about 60 new schools or major school modernizations, 47 major postsecondary capital projects, and 21 major health capital projects. The government will also invest in improving highways throughout the province. Major sections of the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads will open in the next two years, and twinning will begin this year on highway 63 south from Fort McMurray. Altogether we expect to pave 1,000 kilometres of provincial highways in 2006.

The government will create a northern development strategy in which northerners map out their own future. This will ensure that sustainable economic development in this region is supported with infrastructure and human services.

In addition to improving the province's infrastructure, Alberta will work to improve the regulatory environment. This year the government will embark on a comprehensive regulatory review to identify and remove unneeded red tape between Albertans and their government. This will help maintain a competitive edge for business and improve access to services for Albertans.

This year the government will take steps to ensure that forestry, agriculture, and energy, three pillars of the province's economy, are strong and sustainable into the future.

This government understands the challenges facing the forest industry. This is the province's third-largest sector, worth nearly $13 billion to Alberta's economy. On January 1 government updated the province's stumpage system to make it more competitive. We continue to work with industry partners to build a common understanding of their cost and competitiveness issues and to resolve the softwood lumber trade dispute. The government is also working to add value to this renewable resource sector through its continuing $1.8 million commitment to harness innovation as well as ongoing support to the Alberta Forestry Research Institute.

In the agriculture sector, after several difficult years, Alberta's farmers and ranchers are beginning to see new opportunities and revitalization. However, challenges still remain in parts of the agriculture industry, including the grains sector, which faces skyrocketing input costs and low market prices. Alberta will stand alongside its agricultural producers, who face the future with the competitive spirit that built this industry and this province. It will continue to support producers by providing responsive, timely, and straightforward tools to manage risk and add value to all agricultural commodities.

One area of particular promise is the biofuels industry, which offers the potential of sustainable growth and a new market for a primary commodity. At the same time, we will work toward helping the agrifood industry by continuing to press for a substantial agreement in the World Trade Organization that will reduce trade-distorting domestic subsidies and increase access to foreign markets.

This government has and will continue to focus its efforts on rural development to help rural communities become more prosperous and vibrant. Government has already taken many steps to support the rural development strategy, including increasing municipal policing grants, creating the rural affordable housing program, improving rural health facilities, and increasing support to agriculture service boards.

Budget 2006 will allocate new funding to provide stable, long-term support to local rural development projects. This will promote economic development, improve access to health care and learning, enhance environmental protection, and create more opportunities for youth in rural areas.

Alberta will also work with the energy industry to map a new frontier for the resource sector. Conventional crude oil and natural gas are still important to Alberta's economy, but the future belongs to nonconventional energy sources such as the oil sands and natural gas in coal and to value-added products created by refining, processing, and upgrading.

One resource whose enormous potential must be better utilized in Alberta is coal. We wouldn't conceive of burning a barrel of crude oil for heat, not when we know it can be upgraded to make fuels, plastics, and a range of other consumer products, yet that is what is being done today with Alberta's coal, a fuel more abundant than all the province's other hydrocarbons put together. Alberta has coal reserves to last upwards of 1,000 years, and they contain some of the cleanest burning coal in the world. We now know that we can produce from coal many of the things we produce from natural gas and oil.

Coal has the potential to provide plentiful, affordable electricity without the harmful emissions that were once associated with older coal combustion technologies. Coal can help meet long-term demand for feedstock for value-added energy products. The natural gas found within Alberta's coal seams also holds great promise to meet growing demand for natural gas.

The Alberta Energy Research Institute is the lead agency in developing an energy innovation strategy and has identified clean coal as a high priority. This year the government will work with the institute and other partners to explore ways to demonstrate the use of Alberta's coal in creating a number of value-added products, including petrochemical feedstocks. This will expand Alberta's already considerable energy advantage and make Alberta a clean energy leader in the world.

Managing natural resources wisely, including minimizing the environmental impacts of resource development, is a job this government takes seriously.

A Clean Environment

Albertans are blessed with beautiful landscapes that change from prairies to foothills to mountains and from rivers to forests to rangeland. The land, which has given Albertans all that they have, must continue to be the source of life and prosperity for future generations. This principle is at the heart of the land-use framework government is developing. It recognizes that the land supports many uses: resource development, recreation and tourism, agriculture and forestry, and residential. The framework is a multidisciplinary, multistakeholder effort to create a single mechanism for coordinated planning and decision-making.

This year Albertans will be consulted on their values and goals for the land through a series of workshops across the province and a provincial forum.

Another key focus of government in this area is the continuing implementation of the Water for Life strategy. In 2006 the government will develop an inventory of groundwater in the province, and it will make a significant investment in regional drinking water and waste-water systems to ensure safe, sustainable, quality water supplies for all rural communities.

To address broader, long-term environmental issues, the government will hold an environmental youth summit. The summit will bring Alberta youth together to share concerns and ideas to enhance environmental protection in the province.

A Healthy Society

A clean environment is vital to a healthy society. So, too, is improving our health system, one of the government's top priorities this session. This session government will take steps to improve access, sustainability, choice, innovation, and efficiency in Alberta's health care system.

Government will work in collaboration with regional health authorities and stakeholders to improve wait times for medical services. Health care providers and administrators have demonstrated that they can come together to deliver innovative solutions that improve access to services. The Alberta hip and knee replacement project is one such example. It decreased wait times for first orthopaedic consultations from 35 weeks to six weeks and wait times between consultation and surgery from 47 weeks to less than five weeks. In 2006 this approach will be extended to other health areas such as breast cancer care, coronary artery bypass surgery, MRIs and CT scans, and prostate cancer care.

Government will continue to improve the quality of services Albertans receive by expanding the primary care network. In this model, a team of health professionals provides patient-centred support, advice, and care. This year 17 to 19 new primary care networks will begin operation.

This session we will set out clear principles to guide the health system, principles that reflect Albertans' values. They will provide a framework for a comprehensive public health system that fulfills government's commitment to provide high-quality health services to all Albertans and creates greater flexibility and choice. Albertans can be assured that a person's access to needed health care services will never be determined by their ability to pay.

Another key element of the government's health agenda this year is a major offensive in the fight against cancer. Alberta will become a leading centre for cancer expertise in North America. Cancer is a leading cause of death in Alberta. It will strike almost half of all Alberta men and two in five Alberta women during their lifetimes. Over 81,000 Albertans are living with cancer today. By 2025 that number will increase to over 200,000 if we do not take action now.

Research indicates that half of all cancers are preventable. Alberta's goals are to reduce the incidence of cancer by 35 per cent by 2025, reduce the mortality from cancer by 50 per cent by 2025, and ensure that Albertans diagnosed with cancer do not suffer. This will be achieved by making a significant, long-term, strategic investment in prevention, early screening, and research to make Alberta a leader in the fight against cancer and set the stage for a cancer-free future.

Bill 1, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act, will establish funding that the Alberta Cancer Board will use to move forward aggressively on cancer prevention, screening, and research initiatives.

A Safe and Caring Society

Albertans want to feel safe and cared for in their communities. This government will take action to ensure that Alberta's communities are strengthened. The government will establish a world-class

system for managing risks and responding to emergencies, including environmental disasters, to ensure that Albertans are protected. We will work with municipal partners to support municipal sustainability.

Last year saw the largest single-year increase in rural and organized crime policing in Alberta in 20 years. This year government will hire more Crown prosecutors and courtroom staff and appoint more judges to ensure that those who are charged with crimes are tried promptly.

The newly established Crystal Meth Task Force will build on the work of law enforcement officials and organizations such as AADAC to help reduce the supply and lessen demand for this dangerous drug.

We will improve our practices to ensure the privacy and security of all personal information held by government.

This government will take steps to ensure that Alberta's most vulnerable citizens are respected and cared for with dignity.

New legislation will be introduced to help protect children who are exposed to the harmful effects of drug manufacturing and trafficking in their homes. It will be the first legislation in Canada to specifically define a drug-endangered child and make it clear that such a child is the victim of abuse.

The government of Alberta remains committed to curbing family violence. We will strengthen legislation to protect people from family violence by broadening the definition of family violence to include stalking, widening the scope of who is protected under the act, and clarifying the conditions for granting emergency protection orders. We will also launch a multidisciplinary team of police officers, legal advisers, and other experts who will respond quickly and effectively to high-risk family violence and stalking cases. The team will assess threats and reduce risks with the goal of preventing serious injury and death.

We will increase financial assistance through Alberta Works to people who cannot work either due to multiple barriers or medical conditions that keep them from being able to find or keep employment.

New standards will be implemented to promote excellence and restore the confidence of seniors and their families in the province's lodges, supportive living and long-term care facilities.

Alberta remains committed to providing a superior quality of life that is inclusive, active, and culturally vibrant. This year detailed planning will begin on the renewed Royal Alberta Museum that will truly capture the Alberta story. The Alberta story will also be told abroad as Alberta becomes the first part of Canada to ever be featured in the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival in Washington, DC.

The Alberta story, more than a hundred years in the making, is still unfolding. It's the story of how hard work, faith, and determination built a province. It's the story of the aboriginal people who first knew this land, the pioneers who took a gamble on a long shot on the western prairie, and the modern-day explorers who continue to break new ground in so many fields. It's the story of how caring people, committed volunteers, and community leaders created a place that is truly the best place in the world to live, work, and raise a family.

A new chapter of the Alberta story is beginning with the start of the province's second century. No doubt it will bring its share of struggles and challenges, and Albertans will meet them as they have always done, with courage and creativity. Together we will build a future that fulfills all the promise of Alberta's first 100 years.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

The Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen and hon. members, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen!
Send her victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 1
Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, thank you so very, very much. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has just described the government's goal for Alberta to become a leading centre for cancer expertise in North America and to use that expertise so that Albertans can have a cancer-free future. It's most fitting that the signature bill of this session be legislation designed to achieve that goal, to create a cancer prevention legacy in this province. It will be a legacy like none other. It will be a legacy that will have a direct impact on the lives of our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren. It will mean lives saved and pain spared for thousands of people both here in Alberta and beyond.

With that goal in mind I am privileged to stand and request leave to introduce Bill 1, which is the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. Mr. Speaker, this being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 will help Alberta attack cancer aggressively at every level, from prevention to potential cures. The bill confirms Alberta's commitment to address the growing demand for cancer services both now and into the future. It supports a strategic investment in the collaborative work of cancer prevention, screening, and research. Cancer will be prevented because of expanded and new cancer screening programs to detect signs of cancer at an early stage. A virtual research institute will be created to co-ordinate all cancer research in Alberta. Alberta's reputation as a world leader in cancer research, prevention, and screening will grow because of the opportunities presented through this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I needn't tell you that cancer is a terrible illness that is a leading cause of death in Alberta and, indeed, in Canada and around the world. We must take action now to stop its growth.

It's my honour today, Mr. Speaker, to introduce Bill 1, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

head: **Tablings**

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

head: **Motions**

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration on Thursday, February 23, 2006.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that pursuant to Standing Order 49(1) the select standing committees for the present session of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the following purposes:

(1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
(2) Legislative Offices,
(3) Private Bills,
(4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and
(5) Public Accounts.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I would move that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's five standing committees:

(1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, nine members: Mr. Liepert, chair; Mr. Rogers, deputy chair; Mr. Cao; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. MacDonald; Mrs. Mather; Mr. McFarland; Mr. Pham; and Mr. Snelgrove.
(2) Legislative Offices, 11 members: Mrs. Tarchuk, chair; Mr. Ducharme, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Marz; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Rodney; and Mr. Strang.
(3) Private Bills, 21 members: Dr. Brown, chair; Mr. Liepert, deputy chair; Mr. Agnihotri; Ms DeLong; Mr. Eggen, Mr. Elsalhy; Mr. Groeneveld; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Johnston; Mr. Lindsay; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Mitzel; Dr. Morton; Mr. Oberle; Mr. Pham; Mr. Prins; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Shariff; Dr. Swann; Mr. Tougas; and Mr. VanderBurg.
(4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, 21 members: Ms Haley, chair; Mr. Cao, deputy chair; Reverend Abbott; Mr. Amery; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Danyluk; Ms DeLong; Mr. Flaherty; Mr. Groeneveld; Mr. Herard; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Knight; Mr. Liepert; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Marz; Mr. Mitzel; Dr. Pannu; Ms Pastoor; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
(5) Public Accounts, 17 members: Mr. MacDonald, chair; Mr. VanderBurg, deputy chair; Reverend Abbott; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Bonko; Mr. Chase; Mr. Danyluk; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Griffiths; Mr. Johnston; Mr. Lindsay; Dr. Morton; Mr. Oberle; Mr. Prins; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Rogers; and Mr. Webber.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I'd move that the Assembly stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 3:52 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]